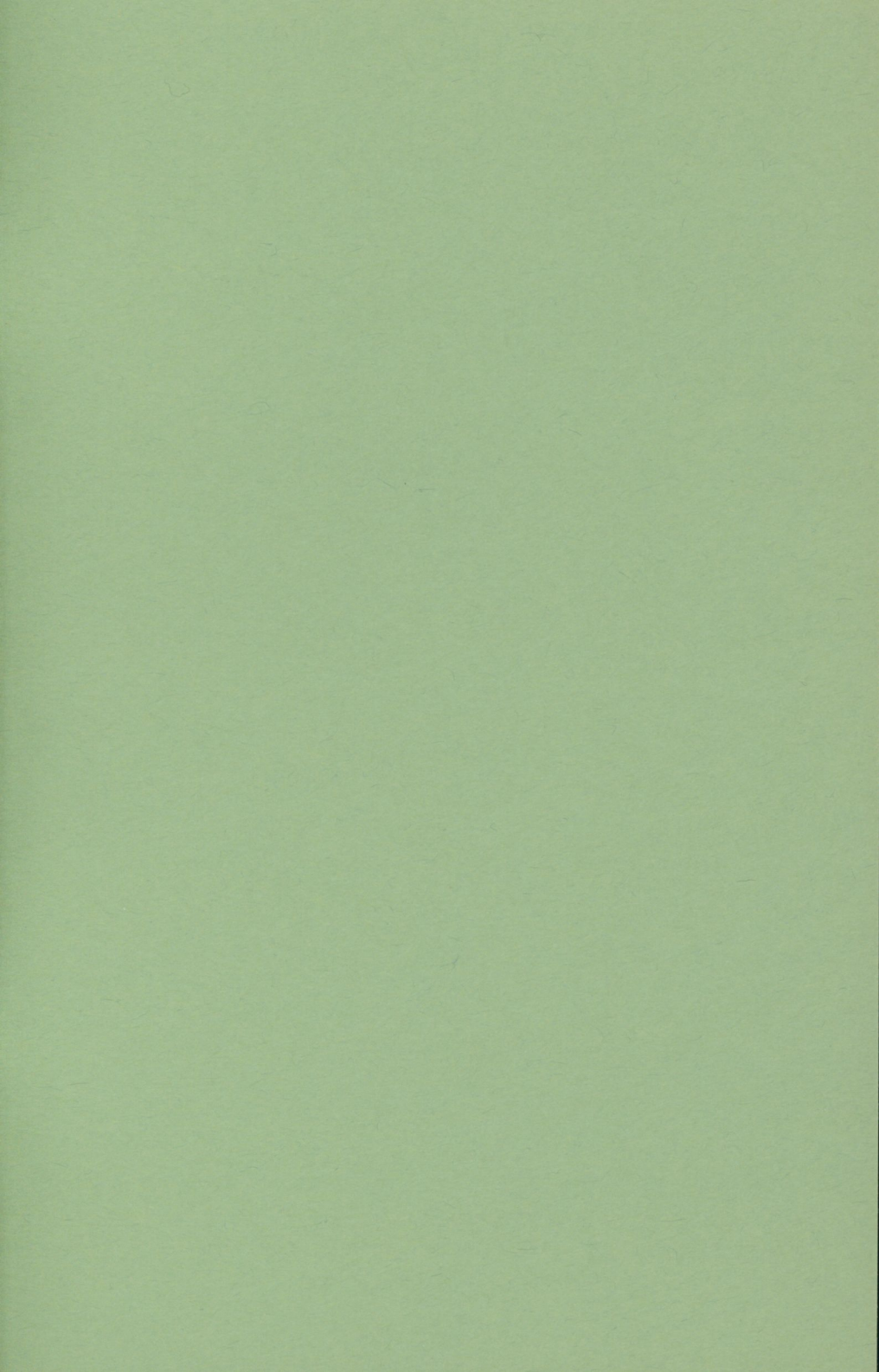


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THE POTAWATOMI INDIANS
of
SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN

EVERETT CLASPY



THE POTAWATOMI INDIANS of SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN

by

Everett Claspy

*Given to Father L. Fisher
October 17 1968 at the
Museum Conference Kalamazoo
by the author, Everett Claspy*

DOWAGIAC, MICHIGAN

1966

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Preface

The author wishes to express his appreciation at being introduced to the study of history at the college level by Professor Ernest Balch of Kalamazoo College. He received his A.B. degree from the University of Michigan in 1927 and his A.M. degree at the University of Chicago in 1930. His field of study during three years at the latter institution was political science but one course in history was taken under Professor Avery Craven.

Material that he had hoped to use in a Ph.D. thesis was privately published in 1940 as the "European Section of Atlas of Parliamentary Government." A Canadian Section had been published in the same manner the previous year and in 1944 the United States Office of War Information in Sydney published his "Atlas of Political Parties in Australia and the United States." A Supplement to the Australian study was privately brought out in 1958 as was one devoted to Canada in 1964.

While employed as an analyst in the Telegraph Division of the Department of State at Washington from 1945 to 1960, the writer kept in touch with his home community. Since then he has had the leisure to collect historical material mostly from newspapers about the area. He started writing the present study in 1964 after a talk with George May, then Research Archivist with the Michigan Historical Commission, who advised him to concentrate on the period after 1840 and to interview representative Indians.

The writer is deeply grateful to Michael Williams, John R. Winchester, and to others who have helped him in the study. As there is not too much precedent for a writing of this type by a person who is not connected with an institution of higher learning or sponsored by an organization, it is a source of great satisfaction that Dr. Alan S. Brown, Professor of History, Western Michigan University, was willing to look over the article in its final form.

Introduction

There are today few, if any, survivors in Ohio or Illinois of the Indian tribes which inhabited these States in an earlier historic time, and in Indiana there are left only traces of one group, the Miami.¹ Pressure for removal of the Indians was not so great in Michigan and Wisconsin, and when the Ottawa and Chippewas had to move, they were able to go northward where there was plenty of poor land and where they were left alone, to a great extent. About eight thousand still live in Michigan. The four or five thousand Indians of south-western Michigan represent the line between the Indian tribes that once lived to the east of them and those that still live to the west.

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See "Surviving Indian Groups of the Eastern United States" by William Harrison Gilbert, Jr. (Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1948, pp. 427-435). Much of the material in this article is included in a nine-page bulletin put out by the Indian Bureau, November 1963 called "Surviving Groups in Eastern and Southern States." Gilbert reports that the only possible trace of the survival of the historic tribes in Ohio is a few Indians in rural Hardin County. A few other scattered groups moved into Ohio from Kentucky after it had become a state.

The Potawatomi of Ohio County again never to have been studied by any university research group. The daily newspapers of the area, however, have given them considerable attention over the years. Mrs. L. L. Vambergh of the *Wesleyan Daily News* regularly discusses the Indians in her column in that paper. The local Indians left very close to the late George R. Fox who lived near Bowling after 1934 and was active in historical, archaeological, and anthropological organizations until his death in 1962.

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CONTENTS

Introduction

There are today few, if any, survivals in Ohio or Illinois of the Indian tribes which inhabited those states in an earlier historic time, and in Indiana there are left only traces of one group, the Miami.¹ Pressure for removal of the Indians was not so great in Michigan and Wisconsin, and when the Ottawas and Chippewas had to move, they were able to go northward where there was plenty of poor land and where they were left alone, to a great extent. About eight thousand still live in Michigan. The four hundred Potawatomi Indians of southwestern Michigan represent an interesting link between the Indian tribes that once lived to the south of them and those that still live to their north. Many members of this southwestern Michigan group were removed to the West in the 1830's and 1840's, but many more were able to remain and have continued to live in the state. Visitors will find it fairly easy to see Indians on the streets of Dowagiac. For example, on any busy day, they are likely to be near the supermarkets. These Indians have retained some of their traditional way of life even though they have kept in the mainstream of modern living.²

The Potawatomi Indians of southwestern Michigan have never been confined to a reservation but they have not strayed far from their original location in Silver Creek Township in Cass County, even though it lacks monuments to their leaders. This is in contrast to the situation in Peru, Indiana, where there are so many marked sites of interest to visitors. But the two

¹See "Surviving Indian Groups of the Eastern United States" by William Harlen Gilbert, Jr. (Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1948, pp. 407-438). Much of the material in this article is included in a nine-page-bulletin put out by the Indian Bureau, November 1963 called "Surviving Groups in Eastern and Southern States." Gilbert reports that the only possible case of the survival of the historic tribes in Ohio is among a few Indians in rural Hardin County. A few other mixed groups moved into Ohio from Kentucky after it had become a state.

²The Potawatomes of Cass County seem never to have been studied by any university research group. The daily newspapers of the area, however, have given them considerable attention over the years. Mrs. L. L. Vanderburg of the *Dowagiac Daily News* regularly discusses the Indians in her column in that paper. The local Indians felt very close to the late George R. Fox who lived near Dowagiac after 1930 and was active in historical, archaeological, and anthropological organizations until his death in 1963.

hundred surviving rural Miamis live a considerable distance southeast of Peru on scattered farms.

The general social and economic condition of the Cass County Potawatomis seems to be no worse than that of the Chippewas of northern Wisconsin who have enjoyed considerable protection and aid from the government.³ They are not bossed by anyone. Although the Catholic Church helped them to a great extent in their early days in Silver Creek, and the church building is still on its original site, not many Indians go there anymore. The church now serves the Irish farmers and the resorters from nearby lakes. Yet few of the Indians are known to have shown interest in Protestantism, nor do they seem interested in ceremonials. In contrast with the Miamis, none of their early leaders appear to have married into pioneer families.⁴ Nor was there ever any association between these Indians and the Negro settlement in Calvin Township, whereas there was much intermixture between Indians and Negroes in Oklahoma and Florida.

The Silver Creek Indians have adapted themselves fairly well to recent economic changes. They long worked on farms and picked berries, but this work is now mostly done by migrant workers. Many once worked on coal trucks, but oil and gas has ended this outlet. Many work in factories, and no doubt they are benefitting, as are other groups, from recent social welfare legislation. The ease of relief grants may have accelerated the movement of the Indians from little farms into towns where rents for old houses are low, now that so many new ones are being built with government loans, frequently, and ironically, out in the country where the Indians used to live.

In this era of demonstrations by the underprivileged, the Indians of southwestern Michigan have never complained to any great extent. They enjoy no special protection from the law. On the whole, however, justice seems to have been administered in a fair manner. The Indians and the Calvin group have retained about the same strength over the past century, which may indicate that they have not been compelled to leave the area in any great numbers because of any belief that they have been ill treated.

³Sister M. Caroleessa Levi, *Chippewa Indians of Yesterday and Today*, New York, 1956.

⁴Otho Winger, *The Last of the Miami*, (North Manchester, Indiana, 1935). This study includes many pictures of descendents of mixed marriages.

A few decades ago, Ottawa Indians from northern Michigan used to come down to pick wild huckleberries in the marshes until these were replaced in popularity by domestically grown berries. Some Ottawas stayed on in the area. Similarly, some Cass County Potawatomes at one time went north to help pick cherries at Traverse City. But few of them have gone great distances away, as in the case of Canadian Indians who have worked on building high bridges, and western Indians who have gone to work in the oil fields. There has been some association with the Potawatomi group at Athens in Calhoun County and with the Ottawas around Bradley in Allegan County. It is said that several thousand western Indians have moved to Chicago under the 1952 Federal Relocation Act, but none are known to have gone to southwestern Michigan. This is in contrast with the situation in Calvin Township where the arrival of Negroes from the deep South by way of Chicago has had a decided impact.⁵

French-British Period

As the Indians do not have a written history, we cannot be sure of everything, but scholars are in general agreement that the Potawatomi, Miami, Ottawa, and other Algonquian-speaking tribes moved into the region of the Great Lakes from the east and north not much more than a century or two before the French arrived. They found an easier way of life in such areas as the St. Joseph Valley where corn grew better than it did farther north, and they could kill buffalo and store the meat for winter.⁶ It is believed that these Algonquian tribes pushed earlier tribes down into southern Illinois. The Algonquians in turn were forced to flee farther to the west as a result of attacks by the Iroquois from the region of New York.

In the 1660's, French priests traveled west to find Indians they had known in Ontario, and by 1668 they had established a

⁵Richard M. Dorson, *Negro Folk Tales in Michigan*, 1956. Western Indians are working as migrant laborers in a nursery southwest of South Bend and are said to have attended recent pow-wows near Grand Rapids.

⁶Ruth Murray Underhill, *Red Man's America*, Chicago, 115, 1953.

mission at Sault Ste. Marie. René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle encountered Miamis in the St. Joseph Valley in 1679 as they began to drift back from the west, protected by arms which they had acquired from the French. Missionaries were in Illinois in the 1670's, and by 1690 a mission had been established two miles south of Niles.⁷ The following year, Augustin le Gardeur and Sieur de Courtemanche, arrived with soldiers and founded Fort St. Joseph near the mission at a site on the east bank of the river, which is now marked by a monument. The fort repulsed an attack of the Iroquois in the spring of 1694, but the troops were withdrawn in 1696 as a result of a change in French policy as to how the Indians in the west were to be handled. The French, like the British and the Americans at a later date, were to have their problems with the Indians.

The missionaries and traders stayed on after the soldiers left Fort St. Joseph. Father Claude Aveneau served the Miamis from 1690 to 1708. A second priest arrived at the mission in 1699, indicating the importance of the post. The Potawatomes arrived about this time and had Father Jean B. Chardon as their missionary from 1705 to 1712. He left when the Fox War broke out, but the traders remained. The military and the clergy were back by 1720, and the settlement now was to enjoy its most prosperous period.

Space will not permit us to give the details about the Jesuit priests who caused the Potawatomes to become so attached to the Catholic Church. Intermarriage between the Indians and the French was common, and both Indian and white children were baptized by the Jesuits at the St. Joseph Mission in the next few decades. Missionaries were not assigned to St. Joseph continuously during these years but only intermittently.

This was a bloody era, and affection for the church did not prevent the Potawatomi from getting a reputation of being warlike. They fought alongside the French in the French and Indian War. In 1763, one hundred of the tribe killed eleven of the members of the British garrison at Fort St. Joseph during the Pontiac uprising. Not being satisfied with fighting the British, the Potawatomi now engaged in a war with the Illinois Indians, in which various tribes were virtually exterminated.

⁷George Pare, "The St. Joseph Mission," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 17:24-54, (June 1930). Father Pare discusses the possibility that Father Allouez was buried in 1689 on a site marked in 1918 by an imposing cross on a hill just northeast of the Fort St. Joseph monument.

Legends connected with Starved Rock State Park in Illinois date from this period. The Potawatomi became supreme over a wide area in the Midwest, but the Virginians were soon settling in Kentucky, and the tribe would join the British in seeking to hold back the advance of the American settlers. The fact that the French were on the side of the Americans in the revolution must have confused the Indians of the area and helps to explain why two hundred Potawatomi from the Milwaukee area are said to have helped the Spanish in their capture of Fort St. Joseph on February 12, 1781.⁸ The confusion continued when the British remained at Detroit until 1796, although Michigan had become a part of the United States by the treaty of 1783.

The St. Joseph Valley Indians participated with other western Indians in an attack on the Spanish at St. Louis on May 26, 1780, which no doubt helped bring about the two Spanish invasions. The first expedition had only sixteen men, but they managed to overcome the twenty-two traders at the post and departed with fifty bales of furs. They were intercepted on December 5, 1780 west of Michigan City and only three escaped. The Indians were said to have been absent on a winter hunt when this took place. The second force was larger and included sixty-five militia who were joined by two hundred Potawatomi already mentioned. The Spanish flag is said to have flown over Fort St. Joseph for twenty-four hours before it was burned. This event permits Niles to call itself the City of Four Flags. The British are reported to have sought to arrange a pursuit this time also, but were unsuccessful.

Early American Period

The Potawatomi were first recognized by the United States when leaders of this tribe joined with other Indian leaders in signing a treaty at Fort Harmar, Ohio, on January 8, 1789, which confirmed earlier arrangements regarding cession of Indian lands. Warfare between the Indians and frontiersmen in Ohio soon broke out again, however, and the Potawatomi fought with other tribes and defeated General Josiah Harmar in 1790. They helped the great Miami chief, Little Turtle, defeat General Arthur St. Clair on November 4, 1791, in one of the greatest

⁸Ralph Ballard, *Old Fort St. Joseph*, Niles 46, 1949.

victories ever won by the Indians. The American casualties of more than nine hundred men were more than General George Washington sustained in any of his engagements during the Revolution. Potawatomi were also present at the final Indian defeat at Fallen Timbers in August, 1794, and twenty-four of their chiefs, including Topenebee, chief of the Potawatomes of southwestern Michigan, were present at the signing of the treaty of Greenville, August 3, 1795. This treaty settled the issue of Indian landholdings in Ohio and provided for the first cessions of Indian lands in Michigan to the Americans. The British then evacuated their remaining posts in Michigan in 1796.

Bloodshed on the frontier had ended for a time, but British influence in the area continued as the Indians continued to confer with British traders and officials at Fort Malden, across from Detroit. In southwestern Michigan, French traders had continued to be active at the site of old Fort St. Joseph as well as at the mouth of the St. Joseph River after the British took over in 1761. A few British or English-speaking traders had also begun to arrive when the British military forces briefly occupied Fort St. Joseph. William Burnett, the most prominent of these, arrived in 1776. In 1782, he married a sister of Topenebee. Burnett's pro-American feelings got him into difficulties with British authorities during the 1780's. Another prominent trader who arrived sometime before 1808 was Joseph Bertrand. Like Burnett, his relationships with the Potawatomes were excellent. Some reports have him marrying the daughter of Topinebee, but this is apparently false.⁹

The St. Joseph Valley Potawatomi were not very active in the anti-American movement led by the Shawanee chieftain, Tecumseh. Only a few, including the son of William Burnett, took part in the battle of Tippecanoe on November 11, 1811. Five hundred Potawatomi were the main participants in the massacre of the American garrison at Fort Dearborn at the outbreak of the War of 1812 in 1812, but Topenebee had advised against this action and both he and his nephew and adopted son,

⁹The Niles Star in its 75th anniversary edition in 1962 states that the wife of Bertrand was the daughter of a Montreal merchant named Bartolet and her mother was Madelon Bourassa who was 3/4 French and 1/4 Chippewa. The same information was given in 1960 by a mimeographed History of Niles Township put out by a Niles school study group. Although the city could not have been happy to lose the story of its Indian Princess, her tombstone was returned to the cemetery and set in concrete. (South Bend Tribune, May 28, 1963) All early accounts indicate that she lived as though she was an Indian, although it is now said that she was educated at a convent in Montreal.

Leopold Pokagon, sheltered American survivors of the massacre. The entire tribe, however, supported the attack on Fort Wayne, Indiana, in August, 1812. They were not involved in the last Indian battle in this part of the Northwest, at Mississinewa near Jalapa, about twenty miles southeast of Peru, Indiana, where on December 18, 1812, three hundred Miami Indians drove an American force back into Ohio.¹⁰ However, the Potawatomi were with the British at the battle of the River Raisin on January 22, 1813, and at the siege of Fort Meigs, Ohio, in May, 1813.

The Potawatomi were always quick to adapt themselves to new conditions. They did not wait until the end of the war to make peace with the Americans. Sixteen of their chiefs signed a treaty at Greenville, Ohio, on July 22, 1814, and twenty-four were present at Springwells, near Detroit, on September 8, 1815, when all was forgiven. No Indian seems to have been punished for anything that happened at Fort Dearborn, but memories of that and other wartime events help to explain the contempt which many pioneer settlers in the years that followed the war had for the red men.

The Potawatomies showed great powers of survival during this difficult period. They seemed to thrive on contact with the white man, while other Indians suffered so much. To a certain extent, of course, the Miami Indians acted as a buffer, taking much of the brunt of the hardships brought on by the advance of the white men into this area.

New information about the life of the Potawatomi has been found in Catholic historical studies. We often hear that the Saint Joseph Indians did not see a priest between 1764 and 1830, yet they continued to love the men with the black robes. The French Jesuits left not because the flag had changed but because the King of France as did other Kings of the period brought pressure on the Pope to suppress the order in their countries. Father Gibault who was to become the famous "patriot priest" at Kaskaskia was at Fort St. Joseph on August 17, 1768 and on March 21, 1773. By 1780, only 49 settlers were left at the fort and after the Spanish invasions, the traders moved their activity a few miles south to the site of the present Bertrand just north of the state line. The Burnett trading post was at the mouth of the St. Joseph River on the west side just north of the present Napier Street bridge.

¹⁰ *Hoosierland*, Jan. 1963, a magazine published at Bourbon, Indiana, contains a long article with pictures about the battle by the editor, Byron Troyer. The Miami leader in this battle was Francis Godfroy who was to establish a dynasty something like that of the Pokagons.

The church, of course, did not forget these Indians for sixty years and always had priests at Detroit and along the Mississippi. McAvoy says that Father Edmund Burke who left Detroit with the British troops in 1796 had considered visiting the St. Joseph Valley but was told that there was so much rum there that a visit was not safe.¹¹

Father John Rivet was at Vincennes from 1795 until his death in 1804 but he received so little support from the French settlers there and was so depressed by the havoc that liquor inflicted on the Indians, that he wrote a letter to Burnett offering to move to the St. Joseph Valley. He later conferred with Potawatomi visiting Vincennes.

Even the church suffered from the liquor evil. Father Badin reached Kentucky in 1793 and was often alone in the state as he could not utilize Father de Rohan who was suspended in 1796 and lived on until 1832, sometimes doing a little teaching. Another priest suspended because of his weakness for liquor was Father Flynn who lived in Kentucky from 1806 until 1815.¹²

We know that Father Michael Levadoux in 1796 traveled from Kaskaskia to Detroit by way of the site of Chicago and Mackinac, being en route from June 15 to August 14.¹³ McAvoy says that he visited the St. Joseph Valley but gives no details.¹⁴

The Potawatomi ceded away claims to land in Illinois in 1816 and in Indiana in 1818.¹⁵ The land that they actually used was sold by them in the treaty of Chicago in 1821 which opened most of southwestern Michigan to settlement. Only the extreme southwestern tip of Michigan, bounded on the east by the St. Joseph River, was not included in this cession. Governor Lewis Cass and Topenabee were present at this conference of three thousand Indians.

The Chicago treaty set aside money which led to the establishment of the Carey Baptist Mission at a site which is now marked by a stone on the western edge of Niles on the road to

¹¹Thomas T. McAvoy, *History of the Catholic Church in Indiana*, 1689-1834, 1940. He says that even French settlers feared the Indians after 1789.

¹²*Badin, Priest in the Wilderness*, J. Herman Schaumger, 1955.

¹³Frank B. Woodford and Alfred Hyma, *Gabriel Richard*, 1958, 31.

¹⁴McAvoy mentions, 151, 161, that Father Champomier of Vincennes while on a trip up the Wabash River to Canada in 1826 visited Potawatomi groups then living near that river.

¹⁵Emil V. Anderson in his *Taproots of Elkhart History*, 1949, is critical of its chiefs for taking money for the sale of land in Ohio and southeastern Michigan before the War of 1812 for which he says they had no claim.

Buchanan.¹⁶ The Baptists soon discovered that the Potawatomi had not forgotten the teachings of the French Catholic priests, but there was no difficulty. Children of the Indians and of the traders attended the mission school, and fifty-eight Indian pupils were given land grants in 1826. The head of the mission, Isaac McCoy, was a remarkable man who made many trips to Washington in efforts to help the Indians. In 1825, Topinebee moved his village to a site about three miles southwest of Niles in order to be nearer to the mission. The following year, McCoy helped Leopold Pokagon establish his village near the Indiana line about one mile west of the St. Joseph River. A visitor from Washington at this time thought that the Indians were making progress,¹⁷ but things soon got worse as the forerunners of a tidal wave of settlers began arriving.

The old order was not quite dead. A group of Sauk Indians from the west passed through in 1827, en route to Fort Malden to collect from the British small annuities that were paid them for services in the War of 1812. Pokagon is said to have purchased from them a boy prisoner who was being mistreated, and McCoy heard rumors that these Sauk still practiced cannibalism. Topinebee died in July, 1826,¹⁸ as a result of a fall from a horse which he had suffered while drunk. He had led the Potawatomies of southwestern Michigan for forty years. He was succeeded as chief by Leopold Pokagon.

McCoy and the government were now convinced that the Indians had to go west in order to get away from the white

¹⁶It is possible that there would never have been a McCoy Mission if Father Gabriel Richard had not failed to reach Chicago until after the signature of the treaty. He left Detroit on July 4, 1821 but stopped three weeks at Mackinac which had not been visited by a member of the clergy since 1804. (Woodford and Hyma 103-104) He went on to Kaskaskia, Vincennes and Kentucky where he spent the winter. On his return he passed through Fort Wayne where he met McCoy, April 22, 1822. McAvoy mentions that he said mass to French settlers there, quite a few of whom had moved into northern Indiana with the establishment of peace following the end of the war of 1812. But they were soon outnumbered even in the church with the arrival in the next decade of Irish and German workers in connection with the construction of the Maumee-Wabash Canal.

¹⁷*History of Cass County*, report of Leib visit, 56-57, (Waterman, Watkins & Co., 1882).

¹⁸Wilbur M. Cunningham, *Land of Four Flags*, 19, Grand Rapids, 1961. He discusses the unsolved problem of the Topenebee name appearing on treaties signed in 1827, 1828, 1832 and 1833.

The site of Topenebees' village on Gitchell Lake was obliterated by the construction of the Michigan Central Railroad. It is presumed that it was abandoned about the time that the Mission two miles to the northeast closed. Some of its residents no doubt joined the Pokagon settlement.

man's liquor. The federal government sent agents into the area to get the chiefs to sell this land as part of the removal program. They even enlisted the aid of Joseph Bertrand and of Pierre Navarre and Alexis Coquillard, who had been operating trading posts at South Bend since about 1823.²⁰ By the Carey Mission Treaty of September 20, 1828, the Potawatomi surrendered all but a reservation of fifty sections which included most of present Bertrand Township. McCoy immediately left with the Potawatomi and Ottawa chiefs for Kansas to look over new land. They did not return until January, and McCoy went to Washington to urge congress to send the Indians west. Later in the year, he moved his family to Missouri, but other missionaries kept the school going until 1830.

The beloved priests of the Potawatomi now returned and most of them spoke French although a good share were from Belgium rather than France. Father Rese (German) arrived in July 1830 and by January 1831, the famous Father Badin (French) now 62 years old was hearing confessions from three hundred members of the Pokagon village. There was even talk that the Catholics might be given the Carey Mission buildings.²¹ Bishop Fenwick visited the Pokagon Village July 25, 1831.

The U. S. Government paid the Baptist Mission Board at Boston \$5,080 for the improvements and \$641 for the growing crops. Mr. Simerwell, the missionary in charge moved with eight remaining Indian children to a building nearby. In his book about the Baptist Missions, McCoy blames the traders for delaying the departure of the Indians as they wanted to profit from the treaty payments. He is also critical of the Catholics for not waiting longer before moving into the St. Joseph Valley.²² As Catholic priests had made visits to L'Arbre Croche in 1826, 1827 and 1829, we can wonder if the delay in reaching the St. Joseph Valley was out of courtesy to the Baptists.

The Black Hawk War hastened the departure of the Indians. A conference was held May 22-27, 1832 in the grove near the

²⁰Cunningham, *Land of Four Flags*, 117-122.

²¹A century later, a third religious group was to take an interest in the Indians of this area. The late President Otho Winger of the Church of the Brethren College at North Manchester, Indiana must have done much to build up the morale of the surviving Miami Indians around Peru. His four books devote much attention to the Potawatomi as the two tribes had been pushed pretty close together by 1830. Reprints of these books, published in 1961, are available at \$2.00 each from his brother-in-law, L. W. Schultz of North Manchester.

²²Isaac McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Mission*, 460, New York, 1840.

Carey Mission at which Leopold Pokagon assured General Joseph W. Brown that the Potawatomi would remain peaceful and defend themselves if attacked by the Sacs. Militia assembled at Niles and started marching towards Chicago. Father Badin arrived back on May 30 and helped avert trouble which threatened when Young Topenebee killed a convert.

The Indiana Potawatomi ceded away more land by the treaty of Tippecanoe River, October 27, 1832. Father Badin was present at this council and his biographer says that \$365,000 was distributed, most of it going quickly into the hands of fifty traders present. Various Michigan members of the tribe including Pokagon, received land grants at this time.

The 1828 reservation was ceded away as part of another Chicago Treaty signed September 26, 1833 by forty-five chiefs including Pokagon. Apparently tribes in Illinois were involved and it is said that ten murders took place in the next twenty-four hours. It is here that Pokagon received the guarantees that his group would not have to go west, which will be discussed later. But none of the tribe were required to leave for three years and it was to be five years before the main group departed.

Little information is supplied by the early county histories about the later days of the Pokagon Mission but McAvoy supplies some background. Two Catholic women had spent the winter of 1833-34 at the village teaching the Indians. Badin built the chapel and cabin on the site of the present University of Notre Dame in the spring of 1834 and in September is quoted as feeling that certain Potawatomi in Indiana who owned reserves had a better chance of avoiding removal than any of the tribe in Michigan. The new Bishop of Indiana, Brute, visited the area in the spring of 1835 following a trip through eastern Illinois to Chicago. McAvoy mentions that he visited the Pokagon village of 650.²³

Father Louis deSeille had arrived in January 1833 to minister to the Potawatomi. He was Flemish although actually born in Holland. He transferred his headquarters in 1835 to southwest of Plymouth where Indiana groups had assembled in preparation for the tragic march westward in 1838. He was so active in defending the Indians that he was ordered off Indian lands by Col. Abel C. Pepper and died Sept. 26, 1837 at St. Marys Lake on the grounds of the present University.²⁴ He was succeeded

²³A description of the village by Brute is given in the Buechner article and on page 207 of the *O. W. Coolidge History of Berrien Co.*, 1906.

²⁴Father Baroux (to be discussed at length) in his letters and many

by 26-year old Father Benjamin Marie Petit, who had been a lawyer in France from 1832 to 1835. He was to die at St. Louis, February 10, 1839 after having gone west with the 859 Indiana Potawatomi on the September 5-November 5, 1838 march. The trail of death experienced by the Menominee group has been well described by Winger but it is said that the pioneer villages through which they passed were also suffering from all kind of fevers as the weather stayed warm so long into the fall.²⁵

The one-hundred and fifty Potawatomi who left the Carey mission site in 1838 did not suffer like those in the Menominee group. Bertrand is said to have gone with them, and the two companies of troops did not prevent some from escaping. Others had fled north to the Ottawas. Some simply hid out in the forests. Some were rounded up the following year and taken to Kansas by Alexis Coquillard, the South Bend trader.

No Indian tribe was ever very large and it is remarkable that the Potawatomi covered so much territory. We cannot help but wonder if they had not absorbed many members of historic

other sources have him connected with Silver Creek although the Pokagon band did not go there until about the month of his death.

²⁵Winger, *The Potawatomi Indians*, 43-53, 1939.

Evidence that tales of the mistreatment of Indians on the "Trial of Death" were exaggerated are given in two articles in the Indiana magazine of History. They both consist of letters originating with William Polke who joined the party when it reached the Illinois line. He was a brother-in-law of the Missionary McCoy and had worked at the McCoy Mission after having been a member of the Indiana Constitutional Convention in 1816 and a State Senator.

The first article, XXI (1925), 315-336 gives the most important letters which tell how the Indians enjoyed marching thru Springfield, Ill. and how they were serenaded by a band at Jacksonville, Ill. Hunting parties were sent out in search of food.

The letters in the second article XLIV (1948), 393-408 are not very interesting but the author Dwight L. Smith, does clarify some of the circumstances of their removal. By the 1832 treaty, they had received 135 Sections of land in Indiana where they expected to remain. But within two years the government had forced the Indians to agree to the sale of the land for only 50 cents an acre. These 1834 treaties were never ratified by the Senate and were finally withdrawn by President Jackson. The final removal resulted from the treaties negotiated by Col. Pepper March 26-Sept. 23, 1836 by which the price was raised to \$1.10 an acre.

The Miami tribe did not leave their great reserve until 1834 and 1847.

Quite a few unorganized Indians remained in swampy areas south of the present city of Gary until as late as 1862. See "Red Man's Retreat from Northern Indiana," Leon M. Gordon II, *Indiana Magazine of History*, Vol. XLVI, Mar. 1950, 39-60.

Ohio tribes which were now almost extinct. We have seen that the tribe extended far down into Indiana. Still others lived in Illinois and had gone west in 1837 to Council Bluff, Iowa, where troops had to protect them from more warlike western tribes.²⁶ Potawatomi from Wisconsin had gone north as early as 1833; 135 now live at Hannahville in Menominee County, Michigan.

Other Potawatomi to the north of the St. Joseph Valley around Kalamazoo lived on reserves established in 1821 and 1827. These also signed the 1833 treaty but were not required to leave until 1840 when the removal was carried out in a humane manner.²⁷

By 1836, Bertrand was having a building boom and a brick church was erected there, but the Indians were never buried in the adjacent cemetery. The Pokagon village was across the river one mile to the west and its last days were doubtless not very happy with so many white men around ready to get the Indians in trouble and often moving onto Indian land before the legal date. The site has been visited recently by the Southwest Chapter of the Michigan Archeological Society which reportedly was able to see Indian storage pits. The group also visited the adjacent site of the cemetery where Indians were buried up to 1837 when the main group left for Silver Creek. It is here that one tradition has it that Pokagon was visited by Johnny Appleseed, and we read how the Chief drove around in a curious two-wheel cart. About this time in order to escape removal, Potawatomi Indians settled on Walpole Island in Ontario at the north end of Lake St. Clair where they still live with the Chippewas. The combined group numbered 800 in 1941 and always has had close connections with the Potawatomi at Athens, Michigan.

It is assumed that some of the Indians taken west from Niles had belonged to the bands of Wesaw and Shavehead who are treated in the 1882 Cass County History on pages 46-49. Wesaw is described as being a War Chief and having three wives of whom the favorite was the daughter of Topenebee. He spent much time in Volinia Township in Cass County but later lived near Buchanan. Shavehead had only a few followers but has a Lake named after him in Porter Township in Cass County. The county history repeats the two different accounts of his death in September 1840. He was a trouble maker but no effort seems to have been made to send him west.

²⁶*Iowa State Guide*, 204 (1938).

²⁷Willis F. Dunbar, *Kalamazoo and How It Grew*, 18-19, Kalamazoo, 1959.

We should not forget the traders of this era. William Burnett disappeared at the start of the War of 1812 while en route to one of his branch posts.²⁸ Joseph Bertrand, after the death of his wife, moved to Kansas where he died in 1865. Neither Burnett nor Bertrand have any descendents in this area but their blood survives in Kansas. Outside of Topeka is Burnett's Mound named after Abraham Burnett (1811-70) who weighed 450 pounds.²⁹

South Bend was founded by a new generation of French traders. Pierre Navarre and Alexis Coquillard came in 1820 and 1823 from around Detroit where both had been connected with the United States Army in the War of 1812. Navarre took an Indian wife by whom he had six children. He died in 1864 and his cabin has been removed to Leeper Park where it still stands just across the river from his trading post.³⁰ There is a Mrs. Alexis Coquillard in South Bend today.³¹ Schools, streets, parks and subdivisions have been named after both. No trader in the region, except for Coquillard seems to have been able to hold on to their land grants as did Frenchmen in the Wabash Valley and none were to become as famous as Gurdon Hubbard in Illinois who had an Indian wife for two years.³²

It is said that there were soldiers from Berrien County with French names on the Civil War army rolls but inquiry at Benton Harbor and Niles led to statements that there are no families now living in the area that claim any historic French blood. Apparently the pioneers would not have much to do with either the French traders or Indians. Inter-marriage among the local Potawatomi seems to have been resumed only in recent decades.

²⁸Catherine Mounds, *Chips Fell in the Valley*, 1963. A children's history of Benton Harbor.

²⁹*Kansas Guide*, 343-344.

³⁰T. E. Howard, *History of St. Joseph Co.*, 1907.

³¹The 1911 St. Joseph County Atlas shows the Coquillard Farm as covering a large tract east of Notre Dame University. Mrs. Coquillard was interviewed at her office across from the Pick-Oliver Hotel where she manages her real estate interests. She has a son, George, living in South Bend and other children residing elsewhere. She said that the five other Coquillards in the city telephone directory were descended from earlier lines. The Elmer L. Navarre listed in the directory is the only descendent left in the area from the early trader but it is said that there are other Navarres living in the region who are more distantly related.

³²*Illinois Guide*, 570 (1939). A new shopping center and Junior High School in Elkhart have been named after Pierre Moran who had a French father and a Kickapoo mother and died in 1840. He is called a Potawatomi chief in the *Indiana State Guide*, 289.

Silver Creek - Rush Lake Period

The Potawatomi who settled in Silver Creek Township, the group with whom we are concerned, are said to have numbered three hundred and fifty at the time that they received their exemption from removal. It was included in a supplement to the main treaty signed the day before. It mentions that a portion of the Potawatomes, "on account of their religious creed," desired to remove to northern Michigan, and, if this was done, provision was made for paying these Indians the annuities to which they were entitled, at L'Arbre Croche. Michael Williams, the present revered leader of the group says that he was told that a group did go up to L'Arbre Croche to look for land but found that they would not be welcomed by the Indians already there.

It is likely that they at first regarded the land that they acquired in 1836 as only a temporary home. It was probably fortunate that they did not buy more acres than are included in a section as the many section reserves of the Potawatomi bands in Indiana soon attracted the attention of the white man. According to the 1882 Cass County History the main tract of 214 acres was in Section 14 directly south of the present Catholic Church. One-hundred sixty acres was as much as two miles southeast in section 21. One-hundred sixty more acres are given as being in Section 22 which would be in between. The Pokagons are listed as being assessed in 1838 at \$2,602 with \$1,690 the next highest assessment in the township.

Leopold Pokagon is said to have paid for the land with \$2,000 received at the time of the 1833 treaty and with funds acquired from the sale of two sections of land granted to him by the Tippecanoe treaty of 1832.

Two hundred and fifty of the group moved here in the fall of 1837. A rude chapel was built here the following year. Several sources mention that Judge G. A. Barney and three other white men helped the Indians put the logs in position. The settlement depended upon visiting priests. Father Stanislaw Bernier conducted services here in 1839, 1840 and was present at the death of Leopold Pokagon in 1841.

The group must have been pretty docile to survive as pioneers of the period generally objected to having Indians around. One wonders if the farmers could have benefitted from their cheap labor as was suggested in the case of Calvin where some Quakers became quite well off.

After 1843, the Potawatomi again have members of the church living among them for the Holy Cross order had brothers

operating a school for them from 1843 to 1845. Father Sorin had reached St. Marys Lake from Vincennes November 26, 1842 and with the help of seven brothers erected there a log building which was the start of the University of Notre Dame. What is so remarkable is that the now famous order had only been established about two years before in France by Father Sorin and two other priests.³³

A Father Alwill was in charge of the brick church at Bertrand until 1840 and all sources agree that there was no priest resident in the area from then until the arrival of Father Sorin in November 1842. The Catholics of South Bend attended services at Notre Dame until their first church building was erected in 1853. A young priest from Notre Dame was present in Dowagiac this Christmas week end of 1865 to help out Father Cook, carrying on the tradition of over a century, of how the community has carried on missionary work all over the area in addition to its educational activities. The Congregation stationed Father Marivault at the church in 1845 at which time sisters took over the school and continued its operation for five years until the band split in two.³⁴ The school was partly financed by annuities received by the Indians. A new church to replace the 1838 structure was erected on the site of the present building and was dedicated by Father Sorin, January 24, 1847.³⁵ Later in the year the Holy Cross Order sent the Rev. L. Baroux to work with the Potawatomi. He was to devote much of his life to the group and was buried near the Silver Creek church in 1897.

Leopold Pokagon died July 8, 1841 at the age of 66 after having been a good leader for his people. His sons by his second wife succeeded him as chief. The oldest of these was Paul, described by some as an unscrupulous individual who was blamed for the split in the settlement. He was succeeded by another brother, Francis Pokagon, who reportedly died in 1877.³⁶ He was said to be liked but it is doubtful if he enjoyed much

³³See *History of Notre Dame* by Father A. J. Hope, 1943.

³⁴The Sisters belonged to the Holy Cross Order which founded a school for girls at Bertrand at about the same time, which was moved to a site west of the University in 1855 and became the present St. Mary's College.

³⁵1882 *History of Cass Co.*, 363-364. An undated clipping says that the settlement consisted of thirty log cabins and a rather pretentious dwelling built for the chief by a white carpenter named Person.

³⁶Oct. 13, 1948 Centennial edition of the *Dowagiac Daily News*. The clipping says that his widow was still alive in 1913 and could speak only the Potawatomi and Miami languages. She was residing on North Front St. with a Mr. and Mrs. Fred (Frenchy) Baril. Mrs. L. L. Vandenburg of the *News* remembers seeing her as a child. She was called Betsy Pokagon and appeared to be very old.

influence as it is the youngest brother Simon whom we find visiting Washington to confer with President Lincoln and President Grant.³⁷ Leopold also left descendents by daughters of his first wife Acuarie, daughter of Sawak, a brother of Topenebee.³⁸

The circumstances under which the Silver Creek settlement broke up in 1850 are not very clear. Leopold Pokagon had not made any arrangements as to how the land was to be handled after his death but the Indians appear to have gotten along satisfactorily for a few years. One report states that Leopold Pokagon's heirs finally claimed the whole estate. Others say that the trouble was over how much each resident was to contribute towards the real estate taxes although taxes were low in those days. Leopold's widow lived until 1851, at which time about half of the Indians had left Silver Creek. The church must have been distressed by this division but the Potawatomi then as now made their own decisions.³⁹

The leader of the movement out of the township was William Sinagaw whose daughter was married to Simon Pokagon and was to be the heroine of her husband's book, *The Queen of the Woods*. Sinagaw lead the group fifteen miles north to the south side of Rush Lake in Van Buren County, about four miles northwest of Hartford. The new land was purchased with funds based on annuities. The original log church was replaced by Father Baroux in 1864 with a wooden structure which he built with the aid of \$1,000 that he brought back with him from a trip to France.⁴⁰

³⁷Wilbur M. Cunningham, *Land of Four Flags*, 36. It is a pity that we do not have an account of these visits such as is given in *Her Name Was Sojourner Truth*, by Hertha Pauli, 1962. This Battle Creek lady visited the same Presidents.

³⁸Andrew Rapp obituary, *Benton Harbor News Palladium*, May 17, 1939. "The Pokagons" by Cecilia Bain Buechner, *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, 10:279-340 (1933) is the best study available. Mrs. Buechner is now retired from the South Bend School system and the writer wishes to express his appreciation for her advice and encouragement for this study.

The Indiana Magazine of History, 57:127-40 (June 1961), has the most recent study of the Pokagons in an article, "Chief Simon Pokagon, the Indian Longfellow" by David H. Dickason, Professor of English at Indiana University.

³⁹Father George Pare mentions in his *Catholic Church in Detroit, 1701-1888*, p. 506, that when Father Baroux got back from a trip to France in 1850, half of the Indians were gone but their places had been taken by the families of three Cullinane brothers and three Daly brothers. The Irish had started to arrive in 1849.

⁴⁰*St. Dominic - Original Souvenir*, a ten-page booklet without date or town of publication in possession of the Hartford Library. A photo of the church is in the Buechner study.

Little is known about the Rush Lake group for the next forty years until Simon Pokagon appears at the Chicago World's Fair. One reference declares that there was no leadership among the group after the death of Sinagaw and Pepeyah.⁴¹

A long article was found in the Fort St. Joseph Museum at Niles which paints a sad picture of the settlement and makes one understand why the church may have been willing to see it broken up. The reporter from Chicago was making his first visit and was not impressed by Simon Pokagon or his wife who lived in a rude shack as did the others. He says that almost all of the horses and wagons had been sold to get money for drink. William and Charles were at home but Jerome Pokagon was away to school in Kansas. A daughter named Celia is mentioned and the article includes several sketches of the cabins.

There is considerable discussion of the claims then being made. Small annuities had been paid to the Pokagon band after it reached Silver Creek but not as much as was given those who had gone to Kansas. They were offered \$39,000 in 1865 and took that money but the reporter says that they thought that it was only a part payment on their claim for \$150,000. They were now claiming \$200,000 which included interest on the unpaid balance. A man named Crancher was representing them and was to receive 12 per cent as commission. A bill to pay the money had twice passed the Senate.⁴² (Payment was finally made in 1893).

No doubt there were Indians in the Hartford area living some distance away from Rush Lake who were better off as were those in Silver Creek who were by now scattered out quite a bit and able to work for the farmers. Trapping was pretty good in the Dowagiac swamp.

The Irish were attracted to Silver Creek by the fact that it had a Catholic church but it is said that the beautiful lakes of the area reminded them of Ireland. Some had helped build the railroads on their way to Michigan and others had lived for a while near the Catholic church in Bertrand. The Cass Co. history already cited says that the Holy Cross order sent Father Baroux to India in 1852 and he was succeeded by Father Fourmont. A Father Labell made a few visits from Kalamazoo in

⁴¹*Pioneer Days in Kalamazoo and Van Buren Counties*, E. S. Smith, Vol. 14, 273. Michigan Pioneer and History Collection.

⁴²Vol. VI of *Indian Clippings*, p. 27. The reporter was named Lowrie but no date or name of the paper is given.

Pare devotes almost all of p. 609 of his *Catholic Church in Detroit* to an extract from an 1886 article by Father Edward Jacker which gives a dreary picture of the group and of its future.

1854. In 1855, Father John De Neve (Belgian) attended to the mission from Niles and also had charge of the Bertrand church. Augustine J. Topash now started the construction of a new church edifice which was completed in 1858. It was dedicated by Bishop Lefevre (Belgian) of Detroit, September 29, 1861.

Father Baroux suffered from ill health in India and returned to France where he spent two years. In February 1858 he returned to his beloved Potawatomi at the Sacred Heart of Mary Church.⁴³ Oral tradition in Silver Creek says that the church during this period had a new source or worry in a feud between the high Irish and the low Irish and that it was not until 1893 that a Cullinane married a member of the lower group. The Cullinane family provided three priests for the church.

Both the Indians and the Irish must have made quite a lot of money during the Civil War as the writer had relatives who stayed home and did pretty well raising wheat. At this writing he has not heard of either an Indian or of an Irish civil war veteran from Silver Creek.^{43a} Possibly the prosperity helped Simon Pokagon make his two visits to Washington, and we know that Father Baroux visited France from October 1862 until May 1863.

Father Baroux served both Indian parishes but neither were self supporting, and it has been suggested that the church felt compelled to send such an experienced priest elsewhere in 1870. He was brought back to Silver Creek for burial in 1897 and in 1913 an imposing monument was erected over his grave under interesting circumstances to be described later. Two official Catholic sources are vague about what happened during the next five years but the county history says that Father Richard Sweeney arrived in December 1870 and Father James Herbert in October 1873.

A church had been built in Dowagiac in 1872 as a branch of the Niles Parish and in 1875 it was transferred to Silver Creek with Father C. J. Roeper as the new pastor. He rebuilt and enlarged the Silver Creek Church and in 1882 it was reported that forty-five white and five Indian families were attending church there. Two Indian families then attended the church

⁴³Father Baroux was no longer a member of the Holy Cross order. He is said to have brought \$1,000 in vestments back with him from France. Pare, 506.

^{43a}Richard Curran reports an Irish veteran, Tim O'Neil, who later moved to Texas. He remembers hearing how a recruiting expedition from Hartford passed south through the township with a band and wagons. It spent a night at a main crossroads.

in Dowagiac and ten belonged to the Rush Lake Church which had a few white members. The pastor moved to Dowagiac in 1886 after fire had destroyed the Silver Creek church and rectory.⁴⁴ The present brick church (third church) was then erected on a site different from that of the original church. This explains why the Leopold Pokagon grave is now covered by a sidewalk. It is said that in connection with the rebuilding, many Indian stones were taken up and lost. Few monuments with Indian names can be located in the cemetery although many burials have been made since that time. The Indians apparently could not afford the elaborate monuments put up by the Irish and never used the picturesque wooden types that are found at Cross Village.

Rev. Joseph Joos, who arrived in 1891, is the last of the Belgium-born priests that we will hear of.⁴⁵ He was very energetic and during the next year built the present church in Dowagiac at a new location, the old one having been near the Catholic cemetery. By 1897, he had established a new church at Watervliet and the Indians were offended when pews were removed from the Rush Lake building and taken to the new church.

Father John Wall was in charge of the Parish from 1901 to 1914 and it was during this period that Auxiliary Bishop E. D. Kelley of Detroit wrote a little booklet, now very rare, to raise money for a monument in honor of Father Baroux. It consists of letters from the priests of the 1830 decade which were translated from French by Father Baroux and sent to Mgr. de Neve, Rector of the American College at Louvain, who had been a priest at Niles and had assisted in Silver Creek following the departure of Father Baroux to the Indies. Much of the material deals with the experiences of Father DeSeille who predicts that

⁴⁴*Catholic Weekly*, (Diocese of Lansing) May 19, 1962, 82-83. A parochial school was operated after 1850 at which a Miss Howard taught a number of years. According to Richard Curran, it was situated part way down the hill towards the lake and was destroyed by fire in 1873. His parents who were born in 1859 and 1866 had attended the school.

⁴⁵In this day when America is so wealthy, we should recognize the aid that we received from the little country of Belgium. Pares reports that as late as 1870, 39 out of 88 priests in Michigan were from Belgium, 21 from Germany, 5 from France, 9 from Ireland and only 4 native born.

Father Joos was brought to the United States when 15 by his uncle who was in charge of the parish at Monroe. Father John Cappon who was in charge of Niles from 1859 to 1892 was from Belgium.

the United States would be punished by a civil war for its mistreatment of the Potawatomi.⁴⁶

The parents of the Bishop are buried on the grounds near the Baroux monument and are said to have often walked sixteen miles from near Watervliet to attend mass at this church.

Rev. Henry O'Neill was the Pastor from 1914 until 1921, and towards the end he was given an assistant, Father Idone, to help with Silver Creek and the new Catholic Hospital. He was soon very popular with the Indians and got them to appear in all kinds of outdoor festivals. The church never had a hall but dances were held in the township hall not far away in the winter. A friend of the writer remembers one glorious evening when his mother danced with old Michael Donahoe.⁴⁷ Many Indians were present. Father Idone improved the rectory and the church but he appeared to depart suddenly, and an era that started back in 1690 was ended for the Potawatomi.

A few Indians still live in the vicinity. The county plat book shows a Rhinehart Wesaw as owning nine acres directly west of the thirty-five acre church tract. He is said to have been the last Indian altar boy in the church in the years just before World War II and to share the land's ownership with a widow now about 85, Mrs. Basil. Three other small tracts of a few acres each are owned on the north side of Priest Street by Indians on what was once the seventy-acre Basil farm. One is owned by Bob Alexis who is now quite old. Indian loss of land during the depression is reported to have been due to sale for taxes. The original Pokagon village founded in 1837 is

⁴⁶*An Early Indian Mission*, Ann Arbor, 1939. The work reminds one of the "Queen of the Woods" by Simon Pokagon in that it reflects the spirit of the times but is weak as to facts. The writer is indebted to Attorney Wilbur Cunningham for being permitted to examine a copy in his office.

⁴⁷He was the father of Leo Donahoe of Dowagiac who was host to Father Pare on a visit to the area in connection with his 1950 history of the Detroit church. There are many references to the remains of an Indian chapel or school found on the Gilbert Castle farm on the east side of Indian Lake. The writer has a long clipping in which Donahoe thought that he had evidence that Father Badin had built a church there as early as 1828.

Leo was the father of Rev. Edward G. Donahoe who was Secretary of the Diocese of Lansing for several years and is now assigned to Flint.

thought to have been situated on a hill to the south of Priest Lake, a little southeast of the church.⁴⁸

Not many Indians attend the Silver Creek church today as there are other Catholic churches closer to where they live and work. But the rectory is inhabited by the family of the Potawatomi caretaker, John Augusta, who has three daughters that work in an electronics plant at Bangor and other children. Both he and his wife attended the Indian School at Mt. Pleasant and when young could speak the Potawatomi language.

At the entrance to the churchyard are two early stones. One is to Henrietta, 1806-65, wife of Alexander Mousse. She was the daughter of Leopold Pokagon. Her husband was from Canada and half French. The other stone is to her son Lawrence, 1833-1869. Many of the Indians of Rush Lake and of Silver Creek have claimed descent from the Pokagons through this Mousse line.⁴⁹ The church is now so crowded with resorters in the summer that there is talk of erecting a new building in the parking lot to the north. Priests from Notre Dame still assist in the services during the summer.

The Irish element in the community has not died out as at Bertrand and in rural Irish parishes in many parts of the United States. Dan Brosnan, who lived about a mile east of the church, was the first of his group to be elected Supervisor in 1933 and served for twenty-one years. He had previously been Township Treasurer from 1918. Two of his sons have executive positions in local industries and a third is the present Postmaster of Dowagiac. The latter remembers attending the one room Red Mill school with children from four Indian families who at times constituted one-third of the enrollment.

⁴⁸Information supplied by Dan J. Brosnan, Jr., Postmaster of Dowagiac.

Bob Alexis has lead an exemplary life. He was employed at the Round Oak and Rudy plants and helped bring up several grandchildren, some of whom now live in Kalamazoo.

Father McAvoy, Director of Archives at the University of Notre Dame, remembers celebrating mass at the Silver Creek Church about 1935 while being attended by little Indian boys.

⁴⁹An example according to a 1924 clipping was Frank Hamilton, 1876-1939, who was reported to be a great grandson of the chief at a time when he was taking a group to Gary for some kind of festival. He was the father of seven children including Paul and Oliver, the baseball players to be mentioned later. He is one of the few Indians who have modern tombstones in the Silver Creek cemetery.

Simon Pokagon

We can now take up the career of Simon Pokagon. Born in 1830, at the age of fourteen he started attending classes at Notre Dame and elsewhere. He surely made a wonderful impression on important people at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. He then emerges as a literary giant and his articles were published in Harper's and six other magazines of similar calibre. Yet he seems to have been poor when he died on January 28, 1899 up in Allegan County soon after a fire had destroyed all of his papers. His famous book, *Queen of the Woods*, was published by C. H. Engle, a Hartford Lawyer, in 1901.

Professor David H. Dickasin has carefully examined Pokagon's writings and concludes that he probably had considerable literary assistance. He found samples of his private letters at the Chicago Historical Society Library which were poorly written and which cast doubt on the statement that he was the "best educated full-blood Indian of his time" which is made in what is still the standard reference book in the United States about Indians.⁵⁰

Mr. Williams, the elderly leader of the Potawatomi, who remembers Simon Pokagon very well and feels that he was over-rated, is of the opinion that the wife of Attorney Engle, who was a brilliant woman, had a lot to do with his literary output. The writer was informed in Hartford that the lady that Mr. Williams knew was the young second wife of the Attorney and that she returned to Illinois after his death which was some time after 1911.⁵¹

In his *Queen of the Woods*, Pokagon uses poetic license, but this is quite common with writings of this type. However, it confuses even Dickasin⁵² who believes his story that his wife and child died near the river. Dickasin then assumes that his surviving children were by a second wife, whereas Winger is

⁵⁰Frederick Webb Hodge (ed.), *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* 2:274 (1910).

⁵¹Information supplied by Mrs. Louise Engle, City Clerk of Hartford. Her husband is the great grand nephew of the attorney through his brother, who was a Doctor and who wrote a morbid type of poetry. Mrs. Engle has written about the Indians while correspondent for various papers. Her mother, who is still alive, remembers seeing Simon walking through the streets of Hartford followed by a lot of children.

⁵²Dickasin, "Chief Simon Pokagon," in *Indiana Magazine of History*, 57:140.

correct⁵³ in stating that they were by the wife of his youth who died in 1871 at the age of thirty-five. His second wife, Victoria, had been divorced, and this kept him from being in complete accord with the church. However, Father Joos is said to have tried to attend his funeral but went to the wrong place in a blizzard. Pokagon was buried at Rush Lake. It was interesting to read in old clippings how his body was brought by train by his son from the adjacent county to Hartford.⁵⁴

It is not very clear how important Simon was among his people the last decade of his life. Williams says that he was only once elected to a minor position but Winger and others give him credit for getting the 1893 claims money. He talked a lot against liquor but is said to have indulged himself at times. We read of him going alone to various small towns in Indiana and giving lectures about Indian life and he received much praise as an orator at fairs over a period of years. His life seems to reflect the clash of two civilizations which makes the study of the Potawatomi group in southwestern Michigan so interesting.

If the area has no monuments to the Pokagons, a township and a village are named after them. The stores in the village of Pokagon have moved to the by-pass highway, but the Methodist Church there is still active. About 1912, the daughter of its minister married a young history teacher from Chicago, Milo M. Quaife, who was to become the foremost authority on the history of the Northwest. Only after his death did the writer learn that Quaife had spent several weeks each summer in a simple cottage at the Crystal Springs Methodist Campgrounds in Pokagon Township which is only one mile from where the mother of this writer was born. On inquiry, a man said that it was tragic that a man so old had to work so hard, and he guessed that his books had never sold very well. Apparently the Indians are not the only people that are misunderstood. Curiously,

⁵³Winger, *The Potawatomi Indians*, 151. On page 157, Winger has a picture of Jewett Pokagon, grandson of Simon and the last of the male line of Simon. He still lives on a small farm near Rush Lake. The children of Simon Pokagon were Cecilia, William, Charles and Jerome. Jewett is the son of William.

⁵⁴Many sources including the *Hodge Handbook* and the 1910 *Catholic Encyclopedia* mention a monument to Simon Pokagon in Jackson Park, Chicago. It appears that it was proposed but never erected. The Catholic publication is probably the best account of the Potawatomi available and is especially strong in the Kansas-Oklahoma period.

Quaife does not seem to have mentioned the Pokagons in any of his books.⁵⁵

Visitors may be interested to know that there never was a Chief Dowagiac although the Round Oak Company invented one for promotional purposes who went all over the world decorating the top of their famous stoves. The city was named after the Dowagiac River by the Michigan Central Railroad in 1849. The word is said to mean "foraging ground," as the Indians were able to find all of their needs in this vicinity.

Potawatomi Politics, 1880-1933

The tradition of holding Tribal elections seems to have been well established by about 1880. Voting was by getting to one or the other side of a road or by gathering under trees where the different candidates stood. There apparently was not any term of office and with several officers of almost co-equal rank, it is not clear who called new elections or even meetings. Apparently at least in the early days, the Indians got together by common consent which was surely pure democracy. The offices were passed around and even the titles changed from time to time. Some Indians spell their names differently from time to time. Others have Indian names and white names that are entirely different. Finally, some seem to have two white names as Rapp and Alexis. The result is that a list of officers over a long period would have little meaning. Nevertheless it is interesting that such a small group would have worked out such a complicated system and have continued it for close to a century.

Mr. Williams, in an interview, confirmed a September 4, 1959 South Bend Tribune clipping that he was present at an 1887 election when about six years old and that his father Peter Williams

⁵⁵In a second visit to Crystal Springs the writer was told that even the Methodist ministers did not seem to realize the importance of Mr. Quaife. It was said that he sometimes talked to small groups and ate at the hotel except when it was crowded. His widow still owns the cabin but has not been able to visit here since the auto accident in which he was killed.

was chairman later, although very old by then.⁵⁶ A man named Alexis Chinnagua is said to have been Chairman when Simon went to the World's Fair. A railroad station of the Fruitbelt Line was named after Joseph Toquin and is located about six miles northwest of Hartford. A picturesque character of the period was Old Wapsey who claimed to be 110 years when photographed in 1897. He would drive a bear to his cabin door before shooting it and was afraid to go to the World's Fair because he had participated in the Fort Dearborn Massacre.⁵⁷

The St. Joseph band of Potawatomi finally received payment in 1893 for back annuities claimed since before the Civil War. \$104,628 was paid to 272 Indians who are said to have received about \$400 each. The group received a second payment of \$78,399.25 under the Act of March 19, 1890. The sum was actually voted on April 21, 1904.⁵⁸

Whatever the real importance was of Simon Pokagon, the people who wrote the newspapers thought that the Council held in June 1899 on the John Mix farm near Hartford was caused by his death. Charles Pokagon was recognized as hereditary chief in succession to his father, Simon. Also, the 75 year old Sam Wesaw Motay was elected honorary chief over Dan Topash of Silver Creek.⁵⁹

We do not know when Charles Pokagon died but he started out his rule like a real chief. An article dated May 28, 1901 says that he had booked passage on the City of Chicago boat of the Graham and Morton Line from Benton Harbor to Chicago for 200 adults, 100 children, 40 ponies and 1,000 pounds of baggage per family. They were going to settle along the Lake front

⁵⁶Peter Williams is said to have been born between 1805 and 1807 and to have watched Indian warriors depart quietly from a Huron village near Detroit to join either the American or British side in the war of 1812. He came to the Niles area in 1825 to live in the Topenebee village.

⁵⁷Capt. O. W. Rowland, History of Van Buren Co., Chicago, 1912.

⁵⁸33 Stat. 189, 210. See June 30, 1958 Claims Decision, 6 Ind. Cl. 414. It mentions that under an act of Mar. 19, 1890, it was found that 2,812 had gone west and 1,100 remained in Michigan but only 291 of the St. Joseph band were entitled to remain and that the U.S. had waived an additional requirement that this group move into northern Michigan. The decision then mentions that \$447,339 was paid to 457 Potawatomi Indians residing in Wisconsin and upper Michigan by 38 Stat. 102, June 30, 1913.

⁵⁹The 1882 Cass Co. History says that an Augustine Topash was then chief but it probably means that he was the leader in Silver Creek only.

on a narrow strip of land which they claim was not included in any regular cession.⁶⁰

By 1907 a good many of the tribe are reported to have moved to Mason County and a reprint of an article in the *Ludington Chronicle* of that year dated October 16 states that Isaac Quigno of Toquin (near Rush Lake) had been elected chief for a third year. Other officers are given as:

Thomas Topash of Dowagiac - Chairman of the Business Committee (Grandfather of John R. Winchester)

Paul Knapp of Hartford - Secretary

Committeemen

Frank Person of Dowagiac

Alexia Mawso of Hamilton (Allegan County)

Joseph Motay of Hartford

Anthony Rapp of Silver Creek

Some of the Mason County group probably returned to Southwestern Michigan, but many, without a doubt, moved on north and merged with the Ottawa Tribe. The birth rate of the local group appears to have been high enough to absorb this as well as other losses.

There was a period of instability between 1911 and 1917. An October 1915 clipping⁶¹ reports that the group was actually divided. The Silver Creek portion meeting in the Township Hall elected Thomas Winchester (grandfather of the present Secretary) as leader and Michael Williams was Secretary. Present as visitors were several members of the Hartford Band including its real leader, Joseph Cushway, Chairman of its business committee who is described as having a "forceful, strong character" and having once been wealthy in Mason County, owning several hundred acres of timberland, although a native of Silver Creek. The Hartford band is called the insurgent group, and both had employed lawyers in their suit for claims.

By 1917, we hear that the two groups had got together at a meeting at the Silver Creek Hall and had agreed on new elections for a two-year term which were held shortly afterwards at Hartford. Those elected were:

Charles Wesaw (Chief), Hartford

Michael Williams (Secretary), Silver Creek

Frank Sawalk (Chairman of the Business Committee),
Dowagiac

⁶⁰Page 126 of Vol. 8 of *Indian Clippings* at the Fort St. Joseph Museum at Niles (Name of paper not given).

⁶¹Reprinted in *Dowagiac Daily News* Oct. 7, 1965.

Associates on Business Committee:

Isaac Quigno, Watervliet

Michael Quigno, Covert

Louis Wesaw, Hartford

William and Isaac Augusta, Silver Creek.

The new officers were said to mostly be young and would seem to represent all factions but something went wrong and Wesaw is said to have not been recognized for long.⁶² A Leo Boziell is reported to have been Chairman for a time.

Permanent harmony was finally secured in 1929 and the elections which took place at the Hartford Town Hall, were reported in the October 11th and October 12th *Kalamazoo Gazette*. Seventy-five Indians were said to be present but the women did not then vote although they were permitted to talk, of which they did a great deal. The discussions were still in the Potawatomi tongue but it is said that in recent years everything is in English as the men now know only a few words, often of the off-color type. The older women, however, still talk to each other in the Indian language.

The vote for chairman was:

Andrew Rapp	23
Michael Quigno	12
Michael Williams	8

Henry Alexis of Hartford was then elected Secretary and Michael Williams Treasurer.

A Cherokee visitor from Oklahoma had brought along ten Indian costumes with which some kind of ceremony was held which was followed by a dance open to the public at which the new Chairman and William Mix of Kalamazoo played the fiddle. The visitor was named Law Man In. He had made money in oil and was operating a medicine store in Roseland just north of South Bend. From other sources it had been learned how he got some local Indians to engage in ceremonies for the first time in their lives. His success reminds one of how a century or more ago, strange Indians could arouse other tribes to engage in war, etc., as in the case of the Prophet and Pontiac.

Andrew Rapp was the last of the old fashioned leaders. He was a carpenter who lived in a shack on the Paw Paw River

⁶²Interview with Mrs. Rosemary Narregos, daughter of R. C. Mix of Benton Harbor, who made a real effort to explain the politics of the tribe. Mrs. Narregos was Secretary of the Van Buren Co. Historical Society for several years.

near Hartford. According to his obituary dated May 17, 1939,⁶³ he was found dead in a field near the Berrien County line, having gone to get his mail from his cabin. He was 75 years of age and only two years earlier had engaged in hard labor on a WPA project. He was a great grandson of Leopold Pokagon through a daughter of his first wife.

He was succeeded for a time as Chairman by Michael Quigno who was the uncle of Mrs. Rosemary Narregos interviewed by the writer. He was married to Julia Pokagon who was a granddaughter of Simon and who receives considerable attention in the 1912 Van Buren History. Julia assisted Mrs. Buechner in her article about the Pokagons. Mrs. Buechner made many visits to Watervliet but never bothered to look up Andrew Rapp as she thought that their political organization was not very important. Julia died in 1945 and her husband in 1947.⁶⁴

Politics and Claims, 1934-1965

The exact circumstances under which Michael Williams assumed the leadership of the group are not known but he had long been important in the affairs of the Indians. He attended the St. Joseph College for Boys at Rensselaer, Indiana, and before World War I was a bookkeeper at the Dowagiac Drill works. In 1913 he was Secretary of the Silver Creek Base Ball team. He retired in 1945 and has since been able to devote all of his time to promoting the welfare of his group. For some years

⁶³*Benton Harbor News Palladium*. The writer is indebted to Miss Jeanette Manley for this obituary which was found in her scrapbook of Indian clippings. She lives in Hartford.

⁶⁴The *Kalamazoo Gazette* published a news story about the couple Dec. 7, 1941 which includes pictures. They are said to be living on ten acres of land near Rush Lake. His Indian name is given as "Messan."

The Kalamazoo Public Library has quite a collection of clippings for the period between the two wars.

They are the grand-parents of Ben Quigno, Secretary of the Chippewa Society. He was sent to Mt. Pleasant to school when quite young and married into the other tribe.

he has lived in the new part of Bertrand in a house filled with books on a big lot. He is now the elder statesman of the group with the title of President of the Potawatomi Indians of Indiana and Michigan, Inc.

When the writer interviewed him in 1964, Mr. Williams was, despite his age, straight as an arrow and apparently in excellent health. He was present in 1897 when the Watervliet church was dedicated, a sad day for the Potawatomi who realized that this would mean the end of the Rush Lake settlement.

William's wife is a Topash, a local Potawatomi family. Three of her brothers achieved positions of considerable prestige as a result of education in Indian schools. Frank Topash was the first Indian to graduate from the Dowagiac High School. After retiring from the Navy Department in Washington, he traveled for Forty and Eight Veterans organization and still lives in a suburb of the Capitol City. Joe Topash was an agent of the Potawatomi Indian Reservation at Mayetta, Kansas, and has recently been transferred to Oklahoma. A third brother, Bernard, now dead, was also an Indian agent in Kansas. His son, Bernard, Jr., is now an official on the Crow Reservation in Montana.

The Potawatomis now faced the problem of whether they should come under the 1934 Act, as did four other Indian communities in Michigan which were given reservations although they were not required to live on them. Michael Williams says that an agent from Washington secured an option on two sections of muck land in Silver Creek. When it was decided that this was not large enough, additional options on high land nearby were secured which would be suitable for fruit. As the local group had always been so proud over being independent it is not surprising that they voted to reject the offer. In any case World War II broke out quite soon and the band never got a chance to reconsider the matter. The tribal officers now realize that a tactical mistake was made in not coming in under the act.⁶⁵

⁶⁵The writer is indebted to his cousin, Mrs. Evelyn Conklin of Indian Lake, for an account of how a Mr. Stark who was a brother of the County poormaster, Myron Stark, was employed about 1910 to take a group of Indians out to Kansas. It is assumed this was some project of the Indian Bureau but no confirmation of the story has been secured.

There was always quite a lot of going back and forth between Kansas and Silver Creek and about the time of the depression Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Topash went out there to be near their sons who were Indian agents. Mrs. Topash died in Kansas but Thomas returned to Dowagiac where he passed away in 1946.

Indian politics was no doubt quiet during the war when work was so plentiful but interest in their organization was revived by the 1946 Indian Claims Act. The act permits tribes to sue the government if at the time of the sale of the land, the tribe received less than the value at that time. It is said that some western Indians will receive huge payments but the Potawatomi claims are quite moderate. It is alleged that the five million acres sold in 1821 were then worth \$3.50 per acre and only seven cents was paid. It was realized that the individual St. Joseph Valley Indian would only receive about \$250.00 as members on the tribal rolls had grown to about 800 and much of the money would have to go to the Potawatomi out west.⁶⁶

Meetings were well attended and have recently been held at the Polish Hall in Dowagiac where trade unions often meet.⁶⁷ Present at a 1962 meetings was their 80-year old Attorney, Walter H. Maloney, who had secured \$4,600,000 for the Miami.⁶⁸ The Claims Court Decision dated June 30, 1958 listed as petitioners Michael Williams and Albert Mackety. The latter is a lay Methodist minister who is the leader of the Athens group. For a year or so he was even one of the five officers of the St. Joseph group but soon broke with the parent organization. He is said to have a mailing list of 350 and may be planning to follow the Huron Line and make claim to land around Detroit in view of the close association of the Athens group with Indians living on Walpole Island.

A May 13, 1963 *Dowagiac Daily News* clipping mentions that a Dan Shagonaby of Holland and a Jack Foster had gone to Washington with Mr. Williams. This indicates a wise effort of the local group to strengthen its position. Foster is from the small Bradley group which did not even have a chief from 1902 to 1954 but at times shared a Methodist minister with Athens. A sister of Julia Pokagon married a Shagonaby and only recently died at Allegan. Many others from the Rush Lake area no doubt settled around Burnips and intermarried with the Ottawas. With the latter establishing one of their ten branches in Hopkins in

⁶⁶South Bend *Tribune*, July 21, 1963. Article includes photos of the leaders and of the meeting.

⁶⁷Newspaper accounts of these meetings read like those described by the eminent New York author Edmund Wilson in his *Apologies to the Iroquois*, 1959. These Indians have retained a surprisingly large amount of their traditions even though many do not live on their reservations, and some look as though they were white.

⁶⁸South Bend *Tribune*, Nov. 25, 1962.

Allegan County, the Potawatomi will have to be on the alert not to lose out in this area.

The members of the Board of Directors of the Potawatomi organization besides Mr. Williams are at present:

John Richard Winchester - Secretary, Dowagiac

John P. Topash - Treasurer, Galien

R. E. Mix, Benton Harbor

John Wesaw, Hartford (Replaced Mackety)

The group at this writing is suffering from an adverse decision of the Claims Court which ruled that all of the money should go to the western Indians and seems to say that the Michigan group are not Potawatomi Indians anymore. The decision will be appealed but St. Joseph band feel bitter that their brothers in Kansas should have put forth such a claim. Actually most of the Potawatomi of Kansas have left their reservation for employment in distant states and will probably merge in a decade into the general population whereas the tribe in southwestern Michigan can find so much work in that area's diversified industry, that it is likely to retain its identity.

Now is a good time to make a survey of the Potawatomi that went west and have been so favored by the Claims Commission.⁶⁹ The Potawatomi at this writing are believed to be about as numerous as in 1837 whereas other famous eastern tribes have declined to such a point that some are virtually extinct. The Potawatomi are the only group to have counties named after them in the three states of Kansas, Iowa and Oklahoma. The Ottawa and Delaware have been honored in two of the states and the Shawnee, Wyandot and Miami only have counties in Kansas.

⁶⁹The Claims Commission consists of only three members. The local group at an emergency meeting in Holland issued a blast against chairman Arthur Watkins who was appointed to the court following his defeat while seeking a third term in the U.S. Senate from Utah.

The writer visited the Court which has rather modest quarters in the center of the huge General Accounting Building. He was given mimeographed copies of recent decisions which have considerable historical value. In a talk with the Liaison Officer for the Court at the Indian Bureau, he was told that there are no plans to ever publish any of this material.

See the "The Indian Claims Commission Act" by Nancy O. Lurie, Lecturer in Anthropology, University of Michigan, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 311; 56-70 (May 1957). The article is part of a study entitled "American Indians and American Life." Several of the writers are critical of the effort after 1950 to close up the reservations and turn the Indians over to the states. This policy was abandoned by the Kennedy administration.

The Potawatomi were not to find security in the west, as Rev. McCoy had hoped, although he lived near them as a missionary until his death in 1846 and had some contact with the tribe. The Annual Reports of the Indian Bureau indicate that the Baptists had considerable strength among the group until at least the turn of the century. The Potawatomi were involved in a war with the Pawnees until 1846 which helped reduce the latter tribe from 25,000 to 2,500 by 1876.

The group split in 1861 when the Citizens band had their land divided up among individuals but they lost it so fast that it was finally arranged in 1867 that a reservation would be established for them if they would move to Oklahoma. It was established in what is now Potawatomi County in that state. Catholicism in Oklahoma had its birth when a Benedictine order of French Canadian priests established a college among them in 1876. 1,469 were given land in 1894 when the reservation system was abandoned but most had been lost by 1926 when the Seminole oil strike hit the county. The group was reorganized in 1948 under the 1936 Indian Welfare Act and has its headquarters at Shawnee, and was said to number 3,000 in 1951 with its members claiming that much of their white blood was French.⁷⁰ In contrast to Kansas, this group of Potawatomi does not appear to have had any contact with the tribe in Silver Creek or even in Wisconsin.

The Prairie group that remained in Kansas lived until World War II on a fairly large reservation which is shown on all road maps only twenty miles northwest of Topeka. By 1930, only 2,454 Indians are shown by the census as still living in the state representing only six of thirty-six tribes once there. Over half were Potawatomi and the *Kansas Guide* says that they had retained their tribal customs more than any other group. They even had Peyote meetings.

Out of 1400, all but 300 are reported to have left during the war to work in industry. Many no doubt returned but small scale farming is apparently hopeless on the plains and it is said that as few as five families are now living there. The agency at Mayetta is closed and they are serviced from Horton, Kansas. The Indians apparently never secured much employment in Topeka which would have permitted them to drive back and forth. Many of the fields are said to have grown up to weeds.

Considerable information about this group up to 1950 was secured at the Archives in Washington. One half were said to

⁷⁰Muriel H. Wright, *Guide to Indian Tribes of Oklahoma*, 214-18 (1951).

have needed interpreters in 1909 and a few as late as 1948. It appears that the Indian agents managed everything and nothing is heard of any independent political organization such as existed in Michigan. In 1909 quite a few of the group were said to have been living in Wisconsin at Arpin, Phlox, and Clifford, and were among the 216 who signed papers to terminate a \$9,037 perpetual annuity. 315 adults were paid at that time \$236 each and \$75,947 was set aside for minors but it was alleged that fraud had been practiced and the case reopened.⁷¹

Contemporary Survey

The present condition of the Potawatomi Indians around Dowagiac and Hartford will now be considered, and it is hoped that some light will be thrown on problems faced by the Eastern Indians who never received very much help from the Indian Bureau. As a start something will be said to the career of John R. Winchester and of his family which could well be written up at length as an American success story.

Winchester was the Democratic nominee for Sheriff in 1952 after having been elected Supervisor of the Third Ward of Dowagiac. At that time he made many appearance in Indian costume and explained Potawatomi traditions, and as an employee of the Kaiser-Fraser plant, made trips to Lansing with union leaders in a futile effort to avoid the loss of the leading industry in Dowagiac. Winchester has been Secretary of the Potawatomi organization for over a decade, and more recently has taken an interest in Indians in the rest of the United States,

⁷¹Information was requested about the claims cases with which Simon Pokagon was concerned but nothing could be located. Instead three boxes of Kansas material was brought out which included Vol. 1945-48 of the Kansas Historical Collection which on pages 488-569 contains the article about the Prairie Band by William Elsey Connelly, Secretary of the State Society. It contains a map showing each farm on the reservation and the names on the tribal list. Much of the material is based on the *Indian Bureau Reports* up to 1907 after which date Connelly says the reports are worthless.

Especially interesting was the transcript of 200 pages of a May 17-18, 1948 hearing at Topeka. Mention is made of an Augustine Pappan living on the reservation in 1937 who was a cousin of Vice Pres. Curtis.

A chief Kack-Kack died in 1907 who possessed scalps of Indians that he had taken in three wars in the west and his father is also said to have been chief. An Edward Kak Kak was visiting the Silver Creek Band in 1913 according to an old clipping and was preparing medicine for the group from roots and herbs.

being a member of the National Indian Youth Council. His family still lives in Dowagiac but he has been employed in recent years by one of the Ford concerns in Wayne County which gives him time off to appear before University groups interested in Indian affairs. He is one of the most active members of the Michigan Indian Commission set up by Governor Romney and was also a member of the 1956-58 body under Governor Williams. His wife is the former Darline Kesterke, whose grandfather, Alvin Puterbaugh, died recently at the age of 93 after having reigned with his wife as king and queen at the Eau Claire Centennial in 1961.

Two of his brothers are active in community affairs in the area.⁷² His Winchester aunts were highly respected, and an uncle named Eddie lost his life in World War II. His cousin, Francis H. Winchester, a postal employee, is currently President of the Dowagiac Sports Council and Commander of Cass County Post 1855 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. In the latter capacity, he was in charge of the 1965 Decoration Day ceremonies.

The Potawatomi Indians have always shown an interest in sports. Oliver and Paul Hamilton were crack baseball players on the Dowagiac High School team about 1921. Oliver played with a minor league baseball team at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, just before he was killed by a train in June, 1923. Both brothers were then working at the National Standard Company of Niles. Chief Michael Quigno had a younger brother who was a

⁷²Harold has long been a permanent employee at the National Guard Armory and is an auxiliary policeman. His son was a 1965 graduate of the Dowagiac High School. His wife, the former Jane Franklin, is a grand-niece of a Pokagon Township boy who became the founder and owner of the two newspapers in St. Petersburg, Florida. That city has named part of its bayfront, Straub Park, in his honor.

Joseph, the youngest brother lives nearby at Sister Lakes and represented the Potawatomi at the Nov. 1, 1964 ceremony at Bertrand when an official state marker was dedicated by the Michigan Historical Association. He is a machinist in a Benton Harbor engineering firm.

Philip, a fourth brother, is in his eighth year in the air force following previous service in other branches of the military.

The mother of these boys is a remarkable woman. She was a Topash, a younger sister of Mrs. Williams. Mr. Winchester died shortly before the depression when her children were very small. Michigan did have a Mothers' pension in those days, but she helped with their support by gathering reeds along the railroad and making them into baskets which were offered for sale at stores in Dowagiac. (The art is almost extinct now in southern Michigan.) She has taken a non-Indian for her second husband and is leading a new life in Jackson where she is active in clubs.

professional baseball player and had a big funeral when he died in his prime. Just before World War II, when Dowagiac played football with Buchanan, it was said that it was really the Winchesters playing against the Topashes.

The Indian boys do not seem to have any more trouble than anyone else in getting and holding jobs in factories, but their treatment in other ways has not always been what it should be. An Indian enquired about a cousin of the writer who had been away from Dowagiac for thirty years and said that he was the only person at a lunch place that was pleasant to them in those days. A waitress recently complained that they get confused about change after having a few drinks and are sullen. In any case they are not loud mouthed or showoffs.

Unfortunately the Potawatomi do not seem to show any tendency to go into business for themselves. They are proud people, and apparently do not find it easy to wait on people as a clerk does in a store.⁷³ With service industry on the increase and factory jobs on the decline, this may be to the disadvantage of the group. At this writing, however, employment still seems plentiful despite the closing of the Studebaker plant in South Bend.

Some Indians prefer to work outdoors. They are said to be especially good at construction work and even work harder than is necessary as is mentioned in books discussing Indians in the west. This may explain why their attendance is not always too good.

The breadwinners in the Cushaway family are said to almost all be engaged in construction work. Robert Alexis, Jr. is one of the best union brick layers in southwestern Michigan. He served twelve years as an apprentice. The men in the Wesaw

⁷³A Joeta Topash operated a mill on the Dowagiac Creek about the time of the Civil War, it was situated about two miles west of Dowagiac.

The 1916 Cass County Atlas shows a Dan Topash as owning 80 acres of land in the same area (Northeast corner of Section 35). This is where the Topash family that we have heard so much about grew up. The Topash name is said to have a Miami background.

William Augusta, 1877-1934, in his obituary is said to have been popular at the National Outdoor Fair at Chicago where he appeared with his wife and daughter Magdalene. The trio had appeared a few years earlier on a float at the Benton Harbor Blossom parade which won the prize for Dowagiac.

Guy Hill, who had a farm just south of the Van Buren Co. line in Section I of Silver Creek, was long regarded as the protector of the Indians and permitted a Joe Mendoka, of whom many tales are told, to live in a cabin on his farm. He was the last of the trapper type; was found dead about 1938, just when the farm was being sold.

and Morseau families are engaged in more varied types of work, much of it seasonal in character.

Although Indians have seldom been very successful in operating their own farms,^{72a} labor on farms until fairly recently was their main means of support in southwestern Michigan. They will not work side by side with some kinds of migrant labor, but are still willing to help out small farmers whom they know when the conditions are right. An Indian who lived in a small apartment house with the writer went out many mornings with others of his group to tie up grapes and said that they could easily make twenty dollars a day. He seemed to like to go from job to job and never complained of being cheated. This mobility may be what the country needs in order to reduce unemployment.

In order to range all over the tri-county area to their various jobs, the Indians must have considerable mechanical ability. The writer has been warned that he should not attempt to operate a car with an automatic choke that is over three years old. He has always marveled at the ability of the so-called underprivileged people to get autos that are not new to go. He has stood by helpless with another man while an Indian showed that he knew what needed to be done to make a gas heater start.

In closing this discussion of the economic life of the local Indians it may be noted that one of the group recently attempted to set himself up as a contractor and others often undertake small jobs on their own. Mr. John Alexis who lives in the Silver Creek church rectory mentioned that he was a partner in the ownership of a saw mill about forty years ago. He got involved in some legal trouble in connection with the business but some Indian agency sent a woman lawyer here who saw that he received justice in short order. He was offered an opportunity to go out to Arizona to show Indians how to engage in lumbering.

^{73aA} Priest is said to have helped some Indians buy land with money paid them at the Court House in Cassopolis from one of the claims settlements. Several were still operating forty acre farms about the time of World War I, Lewis Persons being an example who was also sexton of the church. The 1916 County Atlas shows John Williams owning five acres in the rear of the Town Hall, and two other tracts owned by Indians adjacent. John was a brother of Michael and his wife Theresa was also a Topash, being an aunt to the wife of Michael. About a decade ago, the township named an east-west highway one mile north of the Town Hall, Topash Street.

Stephen Topash, 1838-1919, is reported to have been very strong. His wife was from the Real family and had a sister Libbie who supported herself making baskets and knitting.

We read in the metropolitan papers that only young workers are wanted, but in towns like Dowagiac quite elderly persons are often employed. Thus we read in connection with a traffic accident in which Arthur Alexis, 80, was seriously injured April 14, 1962 that he had been helping Commander Herschel Smith with his beef herd at the Red Mill Farm for many summers and was one of the few Potawatomi left with a knowledge of its legends and language. He was born at Crown Point, Indiana, in 1882 where a number of the tribe lived at that time but attended the Daly School in Silver Creek and had lived on the same farm there from 1897 until 1961.

Having said so much that is good about the local Potawatomi, we now turn to their social life where the picture is not quite so bright although it is improving. It is hoped that it will be possible to avoid offending anyone and an effort will be made to avoid pin pointing any particular person.

With the nation so worried about juvenile delinquency, it is no surprise that the Dowagiac group had some cases in 1964. The addresses given in the paper however were on pretty good streets indicating that bad housing was not involved.

The same year the law enforcement authorities lost patience with some older Indian boys who got into trouble on the streets of Dowagiac the very day on which they had been released from the county jail. Among other things it was said that they were annoying tourists but it must be remembered that many Indians are very reserved and could be offended by the tourists. Yet Dowagiac merchants depend a good deal on visitors during the summer for their prosperity, and the fact that Indians live here is one of its attractions. Tourism would surely be helped if Indians could be employed at the local stores and at the Lakes.

Liquor has always been a problem, and we hear how some of the best workers in the past after saving their money for a few months, would leave their jobs and squander everything on a spree, often in the Hartford area. It is believed that this is on the decline partly because many of the Potawatomi have non-Indian wives who will not put up with such treatment. Also there are so many other ways now in which to spend money.

Finally there are cases in which older Indians who are good workers and would never dream of taking anything from people that they know, have had lapses sometimes in connection with drinking and have broken into chain stores, etc. Many of these acts seem senseless and are presumed to be the result of sudden change thrust on the traditional Indian mode of living. The result, however, is that some of the most respected Indian families have seen members go to Jackson to prison and return changed for the worse.

Nevertheless, it seems doubtful if any other Indian group in the nation has made such a good adaptation to modern life. And it should be emphasized that they had done all this on their own without the help of any Indian Agent or social worker. Many experts feel that the Indians should be put more on their own and it seems remarkable that students of sociology have not studied the experience in Southwestern Michigan. It should be stressed that the Potawatomi here are real Indians and up to a decade or so ago, lived in many cases in congested quarters in rural areas and received little attention from anyone. It is pathetic to hear how they struggled so long to support themselves by traditional ways as weaving baskets and were probably afraid to go to school. Even now they are not likely to talk much to strangers although within their own group it is said that they are quite uninhibited.

Having heard how so many of the good-looking Potawatomi boys have taken wives who are non-Indians, we may wonder what happens to the girls. In the past a great many seem to have married into other tribes which will explain how the tribes have relatives in so many places including even the tribal group at Hannahville in the Upper Peninsula. Some information was secured from women in Dowagiac who have had Indian girls living with them while engaged in domestic work or attending school. It appears that in the last three decades, quite a few have gone to Chicago or its suburbs to work where they no doubt often marry and merge into the general population. However, we read that some return to attend the tribal meetings. More recently quite a few are said to be working in Benton Harbor. Some, of course, have married non-Indians of the area but these do not appear to be as successful as in the case of the Potawatomi boys.

The male seems to be dominant in the tribal tradition and they are likely to be with relatives if they go down town. They are easily confused with the oriental war brides and the same is true of the children of the two groups.

In contrast to the men, few local Indian women appear to have any weakness for liquor although in the treaty days they are said to have been almost as much involved as the men. Everyone seems to agree that there are almost no cases where an Indian girl was ever involved with the law at least in Silver Creek. We read in the west that white boys often take advantage of the young Indian girls on the reservations, but even Mr. Williams agreed that this had not been true in southwestern Michigan although he said that they had probably been lucky. Family ties seem strong in the group, and if the father gets

into trouble, grandparents or the mother have done wonders in the past. If the Indian girls seem so shy, as they mature the women develop great dignity as in the case of several who have helped the writer in this study, two of whom had good positions in the industrial world. That they do not always stay in the background is shown by the newspaper account of how Mrs. John Augusta, 62, was killed while getting out of a car to go to a 1965 Christmas Party given by a concern at Bangor which employed her daughters. It was being held at the Fidelman Resort east of South Haven, the most important tourist enterprize in the tri-county area. In the spring of 1965, the first Potawatomi girl participated in the beauty contest in Dowagiac at which a Queen is selected to represent the city in the Blossomland Festival in the Twin cities. She was the daughter of Francis Winchester.

The decline of the Rush Lake community appears to have been gradual. Some members are said to have followed the saw mill trade northward to around Muskegon and Lake City. Other families died out, as happened in Silver Creek. The 1907 Cass County History called the Bazil the most important there but only a widow is left with the name now.

An August 1915 clipping indicates activity at the St. Dominic's church at Rush Lake in that as for several years, "a bowery dance would be conducted all day and that in the evening the Indians, dressed in native costumes, will stage a war dance for the entertainment of the visitors." The picnics are said to always be attended by a big crowd of "palefaces." Andrew Rapp was in charge.⁷⁴ Money was to be used to remodel the ancient church but the structure was in ruins by 1929 and has long been gone.

The ten-acre Rush Lake Cemetery has lost even its access road and is now mostly brush. The cemetery is now under the jurisdiction of the Hartford Parish where the young priest says the church is finally in a position to do something towards fixing it up, having solved certain legal problems. He says that the records, however, will stay at Watervliet.

⁷⁴Reprinted in the *Dowagiac Daily News* Aug. 10, 1965.

Many of these old clippings originated with Abner M. Moon who operated weekly papers in Dowagiac much of the time from 1881 to 1912 when he joined the *Dowagiac Daily News*. He did much for the welfare of the Indians and was able to speak the Potawatomi language from having been born near them in Van Buren County in 1849.

Hartford appears to have about as many Indian children in its schools as Dowagiac but none of its Potawatomi are said to be very interested in their heritage. Members of the Wesaw family have excelled in sports in high school, but it is reported that they are not welcome at many eating places and that their housing is not as good as in Dowagiac. Many are said to live in shacks but so do many non-Indians as zoning laws are very lax in much of southwestern Michigan. Opinion was expressed that it would be better if the Indians would leave the area as they would never be able here to get over the poverty tradition going back to the Rush Lake days. They were even compared unfavorably with the fairly wealthy negro people who have settled to the east on the road to Lawrence. Other Negroes are living to the north at Covert and to the south around Keeler, Mexicans provide much of the migrant labor. The writer was surprised to hear that two Indian girls were recently married in the Federated Church, the leading church in the city.⁷⁵

Father Badin, the first priest ever consecrated in the United States, gave several years of his life to the Potawatomi. His body was brought to Notre Dame in 1904 and placed in a special chapel of which the interior has recently been rebuilt.⁷⁶ Yet Mr. Williams says that only five per cent of the group now attend the Catholic church. Others have put the figure at thirty per cent which no doubt includes many whose attendance is not very good. Among those still active is the daughter of Mr. Williams, Mrs. R. E. Daugherty of Sister Lakes who sends her younger children to the parochial school at Watervliet.⁷⁷ Mr. and Mrs. Jewitt Pokagon also attend the lovely new church there which replaced the wooden structure erected by Father

⁷⁵A children's Book, *Tommy and the Indians*, 1950, New York by Genevieve Cross has an interesting map of the Hartford area. The people in the book are all named Weesaw as are many of the children now going to school in Hartford and Dowagiac. It is the most popular name on the tribal lists. The book refers to the Webster Hill Settlement six miles northeast of Hartford which Mr. Williams says was formed when Indians bought cheap land there with money received from some claims settlement. No Indians now live there but Indian graves can still be located.

⁷⁶Father Baden, 1768-1853, was an independent sort of person and was never made a Bishop. In later years, he would spend winters helping in poor parishes in Illinois. There is no record that he ever visited Silver Creek although he spent some time at Notre Dame in 1845.

⁷⁷A daughter was an honor graduate of the Dowagiac High School in 1965 and is now a student at Michigan State University. Mr. Williams stated that he did not attempt to teach his children the Potawatomi language as he thought it would handicap them in school as it had him.

Joos.⁷⁸ Two sisters of the present Treasurer of the Potawatomi organization, John T. Topash, belonged to Catholic orders. One joined the Holy Cross community at St. Marys and the other was at Nazareth near Kalamazoo.⁷⁹

All members of the group speak respectfully of the church and appear to recognize what it has done for their people in the past. But some seem to feel that the church has changed or is no longer interested in them. They appear to resent the fact that Notre Dame has been so successful and has grown to be so large.

In closing this study of the Potawatomi Indians we may wonder what are their hopes for the future. It appears that their demands are very simple. About all that they seek is to continue somewhat as in the past, selecting what they like of western culture but retaining some of the spirit of their old life. They show no opposition to marriage with white persons or members of other tribes and do not make futile efforts at preserving their old language. They are grateful that they have received better treatment in the past fifteen years. One thing that irritates them is for people to suggest that they are no longer Indians since they work in factories and live in so many ways like the general population.

It would seem important for the people of the Eastern part of the United States to preserve as much as possible the 75,000 Indians still left among them as an example of living history since so many other things connected with our heritage are disappearing. With the rapid increase in population, we may find that the Indians have traits of character that we might well emulate. People may have to stop working so hard and the local Potawatomi show great strength in resisting the pressure of modern advertizing which tries to tell people how they should lead their lives. The Indians already know what it is to submit to change. Will the white man do as well?

That the area has not lost all of its Indian color was shown in the summer of 1964 when the writer drove past the Silver Creek Church about eight o'clock in the evening with guests en

⁷⁸The *Kalamazoo Gazette* reported the wedding of Jewitt, Mar. 22, 1933, at a double ceremony which included the two daughters of Charles and Lucy Alexis.

⁷⁹They belonged to the Topash group that settled around Buchanan and Galien and became quite prosperous. Several now live across the Indiana line near where they work but there are about six Topashes listed in the area telephone directory.

Quite a few Indians live in Benton Harbor including members of the Blackmond family which formerly resided in Silver Creek.

route to the summer theatre at Sister Lakes. Quite a few Indian boys were playing baseball in the church parking lot and some ran out towards the car. Just around the corner at the Wesaw residence, about fifteen men seemed to be sitting around under the trees talking. If minority groups are to retain their identity, they have to have time to go around and visit each other. They often have to go great distances as do the Amish and Mennonites in Elkhart County in Indiana who keep in close contact with relatives in Pennsylvania and Kansas. Thus we see that minority groups may have a richer life than we realize and it would seem wise for this country to seek to perpetuate its variety rather than sink into the dead uniformity commonly associated with communist countries.

